

# NEBRASKA history news

Volume 66 / Number 4 / October/November/December 2013

## Nebraska's Great Secret

*More than two hundred people gathered near Elkhorn on June 29 to dedicate Nebraska's 500th historical marker. It was unveiled along a brick-paved remnant of the Lincoln Highway, America's first transcontinental automotive roadway. Speakers included State Senator Beau McCoy and author Drake Hokanson, whose comments are reproduced here and take the place of this issue's director's column:*

Nebraskans, I've figured out your secret. As a former Coloradan, former Californian, former Iowan, sometimes Minnesotan, and resident Wisconsinite, I want you all to know that long ago I figured out why Nebraskans love their state so much, and why most visitors aren't so impressed.

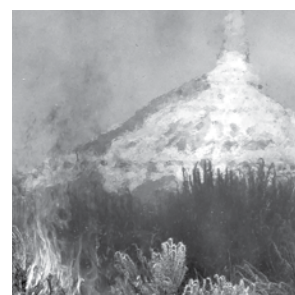
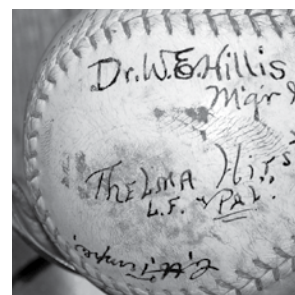
After all, I know your state well. I have eaten steak in Scottsbluff, sushi in Lincoln; I've camped amidst the meadowlarks in the Sandhills. I've visited

your museums, done research in your libraries, photographed livestock auctions, attended your county fairs. I've visited all your counties and made photographs in most of them, been chased by your tornadoes, awed by your blizzards. I've landed my plane at many of your airports. I've even ridden freight trains across the state.

In fact the first time I ever saw this piece of brick highway was from an open gondola many years ago, going west on the Union Pacific. Could that be a piece of the old Lincoln Highway, I wondered?

As we all know, most travelers who cross your state do so on Interstate 80—straight, flat, seventy-five miles per hour. “Boring,” they all say, “450 miles of *nothing*.”

You're not doing it right, I tell them. Did you get off the interstate? Did you stop to see the Oregon and California Trail wagon ruts on California Hill



*The Nebraska State Historical Society collects, preserves, and opens to all, the histories we share.*



Martin Scherzberg brought his 1913 Ford Model T to the dedication of the new Lincoln Highway historical marker in Elkhorn; 2013 marks the highway's centennial. Photos by Patrick Haynes



**More than two hundred people came to the dedication ceremony.**

*Continued from p. 1*

west of Brule? Did you tour the hay bale church in Arthur? What about the Lewis and Clark campsite in Knox County? And for heaven's sake, did you have your picture taken in front of Carhenge in Alliance? No?

Then you're not doing it right.

And to those jaded travelers I say, did you stop and read any of Nebraska's 499 state historical markers? If you had, you'd have learned about the Otos, the Pawnee, the Ponca, the Oglala Sioux. You would have learned about the Slovaks, the Germans, the Irish, and the Danish; about Willa Cather and Mari Sandoz.

But what about scenic beauty? Ah, Nebraska, you are clever.

States with low self-esteem like Colorado and Montana often post signs with arrows that say "scenic overlook," or "camera viewpoint." Not Nebraska. In fact, in your state I can recall seeing only one such pandering attempt to engage the unthinking tourist. A state like Nebraska has no need to point out its scenic wonders. Nebraska says if you can't figure out for yourself that the entire state is a scenic wonder, you should go to New Mexico. Seriously—have you seen a sunset in the Sandhills? Have you noticed our magnificent thunderstorms? Have you watched the wind comb the prairie on a summer afternoon? Mountains are fine, but they're for people with stunted imaginations.

And as of today, travelers—and locals—with a bit of curiosity will discover the Lincoln Highway via the latest, the 500th, state historical marker, right here on what has to be the most significant piece of early Lincoln Highway along its entire 3,300-mile route. Nowhere else will you find such a fine extent of early road so well preserved. It is our own Yellow Brick Road.

And it is fitting that Boy Scout Troop 407 of Omaha is here today to help us dedicate this marker. In 1928, after the Lincoln Highway had been absorbed into the federal numbered highway system, Boy Scout troops across the nation set thousands of concrete markers to dedicate this highway to the memory of Abraham Lincoln.

One hundred years ago, the Lincoln Highway was established as the nation's first transcontinental highway,

connecting New York City and San Francisco. It galvanized the nation just as we were falling in love with the automobile. For decades it was America's premier auto route, inspiring songs, a radio show, and hundreds of thousands of auto travelers who set out to explore their own country.

One of them, Frederic Van de Water, an effete New Yorker, along with his wife and son, crossed this state in 1927 and likely drove this exact bit of road. He wrote:

From grain elevator to grain elevator, we laid our course through Nebraska, traveling over a terrain that grew continually stranger to eastern eyes and a heat that amazed and almost frightened even New Yorkers who have spent summers in town. It smote us the morning we left Grand Island and remained with us, despite increasing altitude, for thirty-six hours.

Clearly Van de Water did not learn Nebraska's secret. But others at least understood something of the immense beauty of the state and its skies. Bellamy Partridge drove west in 1912, long before any of the Lincoln Highway was paved. He wrote:

We had just splashed through the mudholes at a place called Big Springs when we ran up a longish grade and came out on the top of a tableland where for the first time we found ourselves on the plains—the western prairies of song and story.

As I looked all around and saw nothing but space—and so much of it—a feeling of loneliness came over me. Without realizing what I was doing I stopped the car and shut off the engine.

I listened intently for the music of the spheres, the whispering of the stars passing overhead in the daytime, the swishing of the planets through the immeasurable nothingness—but I couldn't hear a thing.



**Scouts from Omaha's Boy Scout Troop 407 unveil the marker while NSHS Director/CEO Mike Smith looks on.**



Ah, Nebraska—tell me of your deep history, the great pathways of the American story. Indian trails along the Platte, the Oregon Trail, the Mormon Trail, the Pony Express, the transcontinental telegraph and transcontinental railroad; the Lincoln Highway and even the transcontinental airmail. Show me your prairies, your rivers, your wind and sky.

Finally, I think Nebraska's great secret can be summed up in a new state slogan. Not that there is anything wrong with "Cornhusker State"—direct, unsentimental, just like Nebraskans themselves. This isn't "The Enchantment State," like New Mexico; it isn't "The Tomato State," like New Jersey once boasted, nor "The Baked Bean State" as was Massachusetts once.

No, Nebraska is the "Imagination State"—no, not quite. The "Subtle State"—no, not that either.

Wait, here it is: "Nebraska—The Pay Attention State."

*Drake Hokanson is the author/coauthor of several books including Lincoln Highway: Main Street across America and Purebred and Homegrown: America's County Fairs. He is currently working on a book and photographic exhibition about the first transcontinental railroad between Omaha and Sacramento.*

## Historic Preservation Conference a Success

"Building Communities: Preservation is Place-making," NSHS's first annual state historic preservation conference, was held at the Fort Omaha campus of Metropolitan Community College in Omaha on June 14. The event attracted more than a hundred attendees who heard nationally known speakers and learned about financial and planning tools for revitalizing neighborhoods and downtowns, economic benefits of preservation at the local level, and how preservation can help sustain the sense of place found in all communities. Architects and planners earned continuing education credits through their participation.

The Nebraska Arts Council co-sponsored a pre-conference reception, and following the conference the Douglas County Historical Society hosted a reception at the Crook House on the Fort Omaha campus. The conference was supported by grants from the Nebraska Department of Economic Development and Humanities Nebraska.

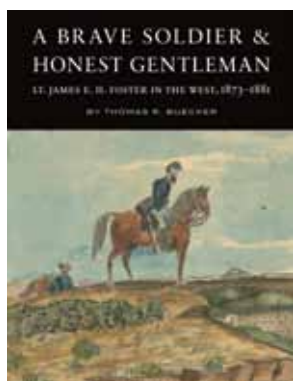
## Nebraska Cowboys Free Family Roundup October 12

NSHS members are especially invited to participate in an afternoon of free and fun activities for all ages. Celebrating Nebraska Cowboys: *Lives, Legends, and Legacies* at the Nebraska History Museum, the event will range from 2:00-4:00 p.m. on Saturday, October 12. Saddle up and head on down to see what we've corralled. For more information call 402-471-4757 or visit [www.nebraskahistory.org](http://www.nebraskahistory.org).



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COWBOYS:  
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Preview *A Brave Soldier* at [nebraskahistory.org/books](http://nebraskahistory.org/books).

## New NSHS Book Reveals “A Brave Soldier & Honest Gentleman”

**L**t. James E. H. Foster (1848-83) lived a short but eventful life as a junior officer on the Northern Plains. His story—and his illustrated journal—provide a rich portrait of the frontier army at the time of the Great Sioux War, when Nebraska was a fledgling state. NSHS curator Thomas R. Buecker shares this story in *A Brave Soldier & Honest Gentleman: Lt. James E. H. Foster in the West, 1873-1881*, to be published by the NSHS November 1, 2013.

Stationed at Fort McPherson, Nebraska, Foster traveled with the Jenney Expedition of 1875, filling in the large blank area on the map of the Black Hills, and making some of the earliest surviving artistic renditions of the area.

The Black Hills, of course, were not unknown to the Lakotas, who resented the invasion of gold miners and resisted the U.S. government's attempts to buy the Hills. When war erupted in 1876, Foster rode with General Crook's forces, fighting at the Battle of the Rosebud and enduring the infamous Starvation March.

Relying on correspondence, army records, and other documents from the time, historian Thomas R. Buecker reconstructs Foster's life, interweaving his narrative with Foster's own words. Now published for the first time, all illustrations from the journal (plus several more published by Foster elsewhere) are

reproduced here, along with the journal's complete transcribed text.

For his own part, Foster was a gifted writer and an astute and witty observer of military life. His story increases our knowledge of the American West and the important role played in it by the frontier army.

Foster's journal is in the collections of the Museum of Nebraska Art in Kearney, which authorized this publication. The book was made possible in part by support from the Ronald K. and Judith M. Stolz Parks Publishing Fund established at the Nebraska State Historical Society Foundation.

The 210-page hardcover is available for \$29.95 (\$26.95 for NSHS members) from the NSHS Landmark Stores, 402-471-3447. Go to [nebraskahistory.org/foster](http://nebraskahistory.org/foster) to preview the book.

Tom Buecker will present a brief program on Foster at 1:30 p.m., November 17, at the Nebraska History Museum. A book signing will be held in the Landmark Store at the conclusion of his remarks. For more information call 402-471-3447.

“Lieutenant Foster's story is chock full of fresh data on the Great Sioux War and the Battle of Rosebud Creek, as well as other period army-Indian activities. Illuminated with Tom Buecker's astute narration, commentary, and editorial finesse, it comprises a stellar work of profound historical value.” —Jerome A. Greene, author of *American Carnage: Wounded Knee 1890* (forthcoming) 📖

## NSHS Donates *Nebraska's Post Office Murals* to Libraries

**J**ames and Rhonda Seacrest were so enthused about L. Robert Puschendorf's award-winning book, *Nebraska's Post Office Murals: Born of the Depression, Fostered by the New Deal*, published by the NSHS last year, they decided to help give it away—to every library in the state!

Their generous financial support initially funded the book's publication and now is making a copy accessible to all Nebraskans at their local libraries. Copies will be distributed to librarians at the Nebraska Library Association's annual meeting in Kearney, October 9-11. The Nebraska Library Commission and volunteers from the Kearney Area Chamber of Commerce are assisting with transportation and distribution.

The book will be recognized with an Award of Merit by the American Association for State and Local History in September in Birmingham, Alabama. AASLH Leadership in History Awards competition



is the nation's most prestigious for recognition of achievement in state and local history.

The book is available for \$29.95 (\$26.95 for NSHS members) from the NSHS Landmark Stores, 402-471-3447. 📖

## NSHS Hosts Ten-State Conference for Museum Professionals

The Mountain-Plains Museums Association (MPMA) will hold its annual conference in Lincoln September 30 through October 3. The NSHS is hosting the event. Museum professionals from the region will gather to “explore, share, learn and advance our collective and individual museum skills.” Several members of the NSHS staff will share their expertise during conference sessions. This year’s theme is “Building the Museum Community: Inside, Outside, All Around the Town.”

In June, NSHS Director/CEO Mike Smith was elected president of the MPMA’s board of directors. Smith has been serving as the organization’s vice president since 2011.

At the conference awards banquet, the MPMA will present the NSHS with its Leadership and Innovation Award in recognition of “*We the People*”: *The Nebraska Viewpoint*, a project that explored civil liberties through a traveling exhibit, public programming, a special double issue of *Nebraska History*, and other educational resources. 📖

## Lincoln Teacher Honored

Sarah Winans of Kloefkorn Elementary in Lincoln has been named the 2013 Nebraska History Teacher of the Year by the History Channel and two national history preservation groups. Winans is an alumna of (and currently a teacher leader for) Nebraska Wesleyan University’s Master of Historical Studies program, with which the NSHS has partnered via the Nebraska Institute, a program for teaching Nebraska history with an emphasis on primary sources and critical thinking skills. Not surprisingly, Winans, a fourth-grade teacher and a North Platte native, told the *Lincoln Journal Star* that she uses many primary sources (original documents) in her class and that the study of history is “a good way to teach kids to be good citizens and critical thinkers.” She is currently pursuing a second master’s degree through Doane College and is involved in writing a social studies curriculum for Lincoln Public Schools. 📖

## Peru State Students Help Auburn with National Register Bid

Auburn, Nebraska, is nominating its commercial “main street” and courthouse square to the National Register of Historic Places, and Peru State College students are helping with the research. National Register status would provide the city with an important tool for revitalization; the students are gaining valuable real-world experience through the nomination process.

The City of Auburn recently became Nebraska’s seventh Certified Local Government historic preservation program. The CLG program recognizes governments that have established a local historic preservation program to survey and maintain historic properties, and it can provide training and grants to help a city do preservation work.

Students in Dr. Sara Crook’s History of Nebraska course are helping with the National Register research project. Students were each assigned a group of buildings to research. The partnership was set up through Julie Taylor-Costello, director of Peru State’s Institute of Community Engagement, and Kim Beger, administrative assistant for the City of Auburn.

Students kicked off their research at a reception that invited community members to share what they knew about buildings in Auburn’s downtown main street and courthouse square. Students continued their work over the spring semester using the Auburn

library, county assessor’s office, Nemaha Valley Museum, and old phonebooks, among other resources.

Dr. Crook said the project was “a great teaching tool . . . The very first day, [the students] were just so totally overwhelmed because it was so different from anything they’d ever done. I kept saying this is what people do in the real world! If you don’t go into teaching or research, if you work for a public entity, this is the kind of research you’ll be doing.”

At the end of the semester, students presented their work at an open reception for the Auburn community. “It helped us tremendously,” said Beger. “It did surprise me . . . how they really did take what they were doing seriously [and] really got into it. Not all of them looked at it as just a class project.” 📖



Auburn, Nebraska, in 1930. NSHS RG2304-1-8



Same intersection today. With its distinctive turret, the 1890 “New Opera House” is already listed on the National Register of Historic Places.



## Welcome Leslie Fattig TO THE NSHS FOUNDATION



Leslie and Marty Fattig



Barbara L'Heureux,  
with LuLu and Sassy

### Dear *Nebraska History News* Readers,

Although I am not originally from Nebraska, I have been a longtime enthusiast of the state's history and am excited to hold the position of Executive Director of the Nebraska State Historical Society Foundation. Before my career brought me to the Foundation, I was the founder and president of AmeriMax Financial Corporation. Originally from Chicago, I lived in Frankfort, Illinois, for many years before moving to and calling Auburn, Nebraska, my home. Currently, I'm working toward completion of a Master of Science in Strategic Planning and Business Policy degree to complement my Bachelor of Applied Science in Management degree I earned at Peru State College at the age of fifty. In my spare time, you can find me doing the things I love—whether that be spending time with my children and grandchildren, gardening, golfing, or tending to the Quarter Horses that my husband Marty and I enjoy raising and showing in cutting events around the state.

I would also like to take the opportunity to introduce the Foundation's business manager, Barbara L'Heureux. Barbara is a graduate of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln with over twenty years of nonprofit accounting experience. Her education and skills have led her to positions at the Nebraska Alumni Association and Madonna Rehabilitation Hospital prior to her position here. In her spare time, Barbara enjoys spending time with her dogs, antiques, quilting, and gardening.

Together we are excited to help further the mission of the Nebraska State Historical Society Foundation.

*Leslie Fattig*

Nebraska State Historical Society Foundation  
128 N. 13th St., Suite 1010, Lincoln, NE 68508  
1-888-515-3535 or 402-435-3535  
[www.nshsf.org](http://www.nshsf.org)

## Honoring History Makers at the NSHS Annual Meeting and Luncheon

Join us on Friday, October 11, 11:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., to recognize individuals who've made history by helping to preserve it. Honorees at the NSHS Annual Meeting and Luncheon at the Downtown Holiday Inn in Lincoln include:

**Don Swanson** of Lincoln, who will receive the **Robert W. Furnas Memorial Award** for outstanding contributions or assistance to the Nebraska State Historical Society.

**Wayne and Rhonda Stuberg** of Omaha and **Spencer Crews** of Lauritzen Gardens, Omaha, who will be presented the **Nebraska Preservation Award** in honor of the restoration of the Storz gazebo.

**Ron Hull** of Lincoln will receive the **Addison E. Sheldon Memorial Award** in recognition of his outstanding and long-term contributions to the preservation and interpretation of Nebraska history.

**Jim Potter** of Chadron (and of the NSHS staff) will be given the **James L. Sellers Memorial Award** for the best article published in *Nebraska History* during the previous year. His article, "Wearing the Hempen Neck-Tie: Lynching in Nebraska, 1858-1919," appeared in the Fall 2012 issue.

**Lori Broady** of Johnson, Nebraska, who epitomizes the best Nebraska educators have to offer in engaging, inspiring, and guiding their students, will receive the **James C. Olson Memorial Award**.

State Senators **Bob Krist** (LD-10) and **Heath Mello** (LD-5) will receive the **Champion of Nebraska History Award**, a new award to be given on the initiative and at the discretion of the NSHS Board of Trustees to an individual who has provided a conspicuous service, particularly in the public arena, that supports the mission of the NSHS.

Doors open at the Holiday Inn Downtown, 141 North Ninth Street, Lincoln, at 11:30 a.m., with the luncheon at noon, annual business meeting at 12:45 p.m., and the awards presentation at 1:00 p.m. The cost of the luncheon is \$25 per person; register and pre-pay by September 23 by calling 402-471-3272, or email Lana Hatcher at [lane.hatcher@nebraska.gov](mailto:lane.hatcher@nebraska.gov).

## Congratulations to NSHS Employee, Manager of the Year

If you've done research in the NSHS Library/Archives Reference Room, you've probably been helped by Matt Piersol, who was recently named the NSHS's Employee of the Year for his outstanding service. Manuscripts curator Tom Mooney, who stepped into the role of associate director of the collections division during the year that Deb Arenz was overseas, was named Manager of the Year.




# Treasures

## from Nebraska Museums

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**S**electd items from the Otoe County Museum of Memories will be displayed at the Nebraska History Museum from late October through December. The museum includes three buildings: the former First Lutheran Church and parsonage, and the Henry Kramer Memorial Building. The church contains reconstructed scenes such as a wedding at the altar and a butcher shop, and artifacts such as quilts and toys. The parsonage features artifacts and displays on Otoe County history, military uniforms and artifacts, quilts, and a large collection relating to the Chick Boyes Players—a traveling act from the 1930s to the 1950s. Big game trophies can be seen in the Henry Kramer Memorial Building.

The museum, located at 366 Poplar Street in Syracuse, is open May 1– September 30, Wednesdays 9-10:30 a.m. and Sundays 1:30-4 p.m., and by appointment. 402-269-2355 or 402-269-2571, [ocgs.homestead.com/museum.html](http://ocgs.homestead.com/museum.html). Free admission. 



The parsonage.



This china jar with lid was hand painted by Clarissa Parker sometime before 1936 in Unadilla. The museum holds a large collection of Clarissa's china, which shows her development as an artist over the decades.



A 1933 team photo and softball from the Bluebirds of Syracuse. The team recruited players from all over southeast Nebraska, played against both men and women, and won state championships and competed in national championships in 1935, 1936, and 1937. Their success provided a bright spot for many Nebraskans during hard times.



Inside the Lutheran Church.



## The Welsh Heritage Centre in Wymore Opens New Facility During Archives Month

For a quarter century now, October has been set aside for celebration of the importance of archives in our lives and culture. From small private collections to the massive holdings of state and national repositories, the archival record holds enduring value as our collective memory, and those who labor to collect, preserve, and make this record accessible are the caretakers of this memory.

Archives Month is fitting time to dedicate a new archives storage addition to the Welsh Heritage Centre in Wymore. The Welsh Heritage Centre history is short but impressive. While evidence of Welsh immigration existed all throughout the Plains, there was no group or facility committed to caring for it. A small assembly of Wymore residents determined to remedy that in 2000. Starting out with a festival commemorating Welsh folkways, their efforts quickly evolved into establishing a physical repository for artifacts. In 2003 a building was acquired and the Welsh Heritage Centre was born. The facility included an exhibit space, auditorium, gift shop, and library. Over time, a mural

depicting Welsh immigration and a Hall of Heroes commemorating prominent Welsh Americans were added. While volunteer-run, the centre is operated with the highest professional standards.

As the Centre increasingly became known, the Welsh North American Association asked it to take on the unique archival materials they held, but could not manage. Other Welsh societies followed suit. The Welsh Heritage Centre found itself in the archives business like never before. The need for a dedicated space for the historically valuable records and papers became clear.

Construction of the Archives addition began this past spring after an aggressive fundraising campaign. The concrete structure is fire-rated, environmentally controlled and is built to withstand a tornado. It includes a housing area for the archival collections, plus additional space for collections processing, cataloging, and scanning.

The Archives' dedication and grand opening will be held October 5, 2013, as part of the organization's annual Welsh Heritage Festival. A ribbon cutting will initiate a tour of the facility, and the public is invited to attend. [www.welshheritage.org](http://www.welshheritage.org)

**Germans from Russia arrive in Lincoln, Nebraska.**  
NSHS RG2824-1-143

## Coming in *Nebraska History*

By the early twentieth century physicians were commonly present during childbirth, and local health departments tried to regulate (if not do away with) the traditional practice of mid-

wifery. But many immigrant communities resisted the changes. Rebecca J. Anderson looks specifically at Lincoln's Volga Germans in "Grandma Gable, she brought Ralph": Midwifery and the Lincoln, Nebraska, Department of Health in the Early Twentieth Century," in the Winter 2013 issue of *Nebraska History*.

In the same issue, Lois Arnold traces the lives and careers of the Barbours, a family of eminent paleontologists who did much to establish the field as a modern scientific discipline in Nebraska, and who discovered many of the notable specimens now displayed at Agate Fossil Beds National Monument and the University of Nebraska State Museum at Morrill Hall.

Roger Welsch's remarks from the 2013 Chief Standing Bear Breakfast, and John Carter's analysis of the earliest known (and previously unpublished) photograph of the Omaha Stockyards are also featured in the issue.

Look for the magazine in your mailbox the second week of November.







The June 29 controlled burn cleared away thick sagebrush growing near the visitor center.

## Fire at Chimney Rock!

When the Bayard and Minatare fire departments arrived at Chimney Rock on June 29, they weren't there to put out a fire. They came to start one. Sagebrush had been growing thick around the Ethel & Christopher J. Abbott Visitor Center (an NSHS facility); the solution was a controlled burn to reduce the risk of an uncontrolled fire later. 🌲



Charred ground and not a charred building—success!



Firefighters from two local departments conducted the burn.

## Cowboys and More this Holiday Season at Landmark Stores!

Put on your boots and spurs and visit our newest exhibit, *Nebraska Cowboys: Lives, Legends, and Legacies*, at the Nebraska History Museum at Centennial Mall and P Street in downtown Lincoln. You'll also find a variety of cowboy merchandise in the Landmark Store, including *Buffalo Bill: Scout, Showman, Visionary* by Steve Friesen.

As holiday season approaches, remember the Landmark Store for a selection of unique, fun, and educational merchandise. As a member, take advantage of your discount benefit.

If you don't know what to get that special someone, consider an NSHS membership, a gift that keeps on giving all year long. 402-471-3272, or email [lane.hatcher@nebraska.gov](mailto:lane.hatcher@nebraska.gov).

We hope to see you at any of our Landmark Store locations: in the Nebraska History Museum; Nebraska State Capitol, Lincoln (Room 1417, ground floor, south hall); or Chimney Rock National Historic Site, 1.5 miles south of US 92 on Chimney Rock Road, Bayard. Or call 402-471-3447 or 1-800-833-6747. Happy Holidays! 🌲

# UPCOMING EVENTS

*Unless otherwise noted, all events are free and open to the public.*



Children gathered around Christmas tree at the home of C. F. Ladd of Lincoln in 1900. NSHS RG3321-4

## NSHS Holiday Closings

All NSHS facilities will be closed on Veterans Day, November 11; Thanksgiving Day, November 28; and Friday, November 29, also a state holiday; Christmas Day, December 25; and New Year's Day, January 1. See [nebraskahistory.org](http://nebraskahistory.org) for updated closing information.

### October 5 • 11:30 a.m.

#### **Ribbon cutting and public tour Welsh Heritage Centre Archive Dedication & Grand Opening**

at Fifth Welsh Heritage Festival, Wymore • Berwyn Jones  
402-421-8192 • [berwynjones@windstream.net](mailto:berwynjones@windstream.net)

### October 11 • 11:30-2:00 p.m.

#### **NSHS Annual Awards Luncheon**

Holiday Inn Downtown, 141 No. 9th, Lincoln  
(reservations required)  
402-471-3272 • [iana.hatcher@nebraska.gov](mailto:iana.hatcher@nebraska.gov)

### October 12 • 2-4 p.m.

#### **"Nebraska Cowboys: Lives, Legends, and Legacies"**

#### **Free Family Workshop**

NHM  
402-471-4757 • [judy.keetle@nebraska.gov](mailto:judy.keetle@nebraska.gov)

### October 13 • 2 p.m.

#### **"Up the River We Came," with Dwight Howe (Omaha/Ponca)**

#### **Sunday Afternoon at the Museum**

John G. Neihardt State Historic Site, Bancroft  
888-777-4667 • [www.neihardtcenter.org](http://www.neihardtcenter.org)

### October 15 • 10-11 a.m.

#### **Reading *A Tallgrass Prairie Alphabet*, by Claudia McGehee**

#### **Hour at the Museum**

NHM  
402-471-4757 • [judy.keetle@nebraska.gov](mailto:judy.keetle@nebraska.gov)

### October 17 • 12 noon

James Vannurden, National Museum of Roller Skating

#### **"National Museum of Roller Skating Collections"**

#### **Brown Bag Lecture Series**

NHM

### November 10 • 5:30-9:00 p.m.

#### **John G. Neihardt Foundation dinner Annual Neihardt Laureate Feast**

Culinary School, Omaha (reservations required)  
888-777-4667

### November 16 • 2-4 p.m.

#### **"Civil War Remembrance Day"**

#### **Free Family Workshop**

NHM  
402-471-4757 • [judy.keetle@nebraska.gov](mailto:judy.keetle@nebraska.gov)

### November 17 • 1:30-2:30 p.m.

#### ***A Brave Soldier & Honest Gentleman, Lt. James E. H. Foster in the West, 1873-1881*, by Thomas R. Buecker**

#### **Program and Book Signing**

Landmark Store, NHM  
402-471-3447 • [deb.mcwilliams@nebraska.gov](mailto:deb.mcwilliams@nebraska.gov)

### November 17 • 2 p.m.

#### **Monty McCord, author of *The 1931 Hastings Bank Job & the Bloody Bandit Trail***

#### **Sunday Afternoon at the Museum**

John G. Neihardt State Historic Site

### November 21 • 12 noon

James J. Reisdorff, railroad historian, author

#### **"Nebraska Railroads"**

#### **Brown Bag Lecture Series**

NHM

### December 8 • 1-5 p.m.

#### **Free Holiday Open House**

Thomas P. Kennard House, 1627 H St., Lincoln  
402-471-4764 • [tom.buecker@nebraska.gov](mailto:tom.buecker@nebraska.gov)

### December 8 • 2-4 p.m.

#### **"Celebrate a Cowboy Christmas"**

#### **Free Family Workshop**

NHM  
402-471-4757 • [judy.keetle@nebraska.gov](mailto:judy.keetle@nebraska.gov)

### December 8 • 2 p.m.

#### **"Prairie Fiddle," musical program with David Fowler and Carolyn Johnsen**

#### **Sunday Afternoon at the Museum**

John G. Neihardt State Historic Site

### December 19 • 12 noon

NSHS Collections Division curators

#### **"Treasures from the Collections"**

#### **Brown Bag Lecture Series**

NHM

**For updated events, see the Society's Facebook page,  
linked from [www.nebraskahistory.org](http://www.nebraskahistory.org)**



## Nebraska Students Excel at National History Day

Fifty-nine Nebraska middle and high school students advanced from the state National History Day competition to the nationals at the University of Maryland, and several students were among the top-ranked competitors.

Joel Myers and Spencer Rothfuss of Discovery Home School Group in Omaha won the Junior Division Group Web Site category for "Turning Up the Soil: How the Dust Bowl Changed Farming."

Justin Myers and Will Scheopner, also of Discovery Home School Group, placed third in the Junior Division Group Documentary category with "Free Land for Free Men: The Turning Point of the Homestead Act of 1862."

Slayde Bittner, Kelsey Faust, and Rebekah Hergott of St. Isadore Elementary in Columbus placed third in the Junior Division Group Performance category with "A Chance of a Lifetime: Developing the West all Started with the South Seceding from the Union."

The judges also named these Nebraska's Outstanding Entries:

Junior Division: Jack Arens, Emma Good, Sydney Graff, Miranda Raymond, and Breanna Schwindt of Ainsworth Community Schools for "Rosie Turned Her Life Around So We Could Win the War" (Group Performance).

Senior Division: Aurora Kenworthy of Bellevue West High School for "Girl Scouting: A Turning Point in the Perception of Women" (Individual Web Site).

Nebraska teacher Moni Hourt of Crawford Public Schools received the History (Channel) Service Award. Hourt has involved her students in National History Day for twenty years, traveling to Maryland many times to accompany state winners. 📖

## NSHS Annual Report: Online September 30

The 2012-2013 NSHS Annual Report will be an electronic-only document available at [nebraskahistory.org](http://nebraskahistory.org) starting September 30. Go to [nebraskahistory.org/admin/report](http://nebraskahistory.org/admin/report), or just click on the "Publications" tab on our website's home page. If web access is an issue, call Lana Hatcher at 402-471-3272 to request that a printed copy be mailed to you. 📖

## Revisit Holiday Memories with the NSHS Two Ways on December 8

Experience a Christmas from the past during a free holiday open house at the Thomas P. Kennard House, Nebraska's Statehood Memorial, at 1627 H Street in Lincoln, on December 8 from 1 to 5 p.m. In December the house is decorated for a Victorian Christmas, complete with a Christmas tree, toys and gifts, historic photographs, and Christmas cards from the 1870s. For additional information on the open house and tours at the Kennard House, open by appointment, call 402-471-4764.

"Celebrate a Cowboy Christmas," is a Free Family Workshop to be held at the Nebraska History Museum, Fifteenth and P streets, in Lincoln from 2 to 4 p.m. that same day. Attendees will tour the new exhibit *Nebraska Cowboys: Lives, Legends, and Legacies* and listen to cowboy music as they make cowboy and western-style Christmas ornaments to take home. No pre-registration is required; supplies will be provided. 402-471-4757. 📖

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Participants in the Scandinavian Christmas customs workshop in 2010.

## Ford Center Celebrates Gerald Ford Centennial, New Citizens

In July, the Gerald R. Ford Conservation Center, built on the birthsite of the only Nebraska-born president, honored the centennial of its namesake's birth by hosting a naturalization ceremony for fifty new citizens from twenty-five countries. The Ford Center, which contains an exhibit on the life of President Ford in addition to conservation laboratories where artifacts and paintings are preserved, also hosted a community open house on his 100th birthday.

In the naturalization ceremony keynote address, NSHS Director and CEO Mike Smith noted that while Ford wasn't an immigrant, he was born into a broken

home (his mother fled an abusive marriage just sixteen days after Ford was born) and his future was as uncertain as the future of many immigrants. "Nothing that happened to him in the first two weeks of his life would have given any clue to the service he would render to his fellow citizens," Smith said. Likewise, no one knows what service the new citizens or their children may render.

"I do know two things, however. First, you will have the opportunity to render civic service as voters, taxpayers, and active citizens. Second, your civic service is essential to the future of the American republic."

After the ceremony, the new Americans filled out voter registration forms. 📖

# hours

**Nebraska  
History Museum**  
15 & P Streets, Lincoln  
402-471-4754

Monday-Friday, 9-4:30  
Sat. & Sun., 1-4:30

**Museum Store**  
402-471-3447

Monday-Friday, 10-4:30  
Saturday & Sunday, 1-4

**Library/Archives**  
1500 R Street, Lincoln  
402-471-4751

Tuesday-Friday, 10-4  
Saturday, 8-5

See Facebook link at  
[nebraskahistory.org](http://nebraskahistory.org)

facebook

**State Historic Site hours:**  
[www.nebraskahistory.org](http://www.nebraskahistory.org)

NEBRASKA

# history news

Nebraska State Historical Society

## From the Collection. . . Saddle Up . . . on Plastic

What could be more iconic of mid-twentieth century America than a Western saddle made of plastic? A post-World War II leather shortage prompted Alliance, Nebraska, businessman William B. Vandegrift to experiment with new materials. The first saddle was completed in the fall of 1946 in T. C. "Tommy" Neilson's saddle shop in Lusk, Wyoming.

The plastic was shaped with heat and glued to a rawhide-covered saddletree. Many different colors were available. Though the saddles were durable, they became slick and brittle during cold weather and never caught on with cowboys and ranchers. However, Roy Rogers, promoted by movie studios as the "King of the Cowboys," liked the colorful saddles so much he agreed to become a spokesman for the company. Rogers purchased several saddles for use in parades and public appearances.

The company relocated to Scottsbluff, Nebraska, in 1949. Soon, a tornado destroyed the factory and ended the business. In all, Western Plastics produced about sixty saddles during its short life. This saddle is part of the current *Nebraska Cowboys* exhibit at the Nebraska History Museum, courtesy of the Legacy of the Plains Museum, Gering, Nebraska. 